

Quico's story: An ethnopoetic analysis of a Gypsy boy's narratives at school

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Así como la imaginación poética tiene una lógica humana, la inspiración poética tiene una lógica poética.

[Just as poetic imagination has a human logic, poetic inspiration has a poetic logic.]

Federico García Lorca,
Obras Completas (1965)

Abstract

*This article examines a narrative told by Quico, a five-year-old Gypsy child, in a Spanish kindergarten classroom. The guiding framework stems from ethnopoetics and performance-oriented narrative analysis. First, a stanza analysis of the narrative is presented. Structurally the narrative can be described as topic associative in the sense discussed by Sarah Michaels (1981, 1991). The text is organized around a set of recurrent markers and rhetorical devices such as *aluego* 'later' or dramatized direct speech. In content, the story deals with events in his family and his role as agent in these routines. Second, the child's telling is resituated and examined in its interactional context. Contrary to previous studies, despite clear differences between Quico's discourse style and the speech patterns of the rest of the children, his tellings were well received and managed by the teacher and the rest of the class. This outcome is related to the general goals set by the teacher for this speech event and to her experience with Gypsy students and provides a new analytical case that can be incorporated into the home-school mismatch framework.*

Keywords: *ethnopoetics; classroom interaction; Gypsy; minority education; personal narrative.*

Over the summer Quico and his family finally received an apartment in one of the new public housing projects of the school neighborhood. This

meant moving out of one of the largest, oldest, and most controversial Gypsy settlements in Madrid where Quico had lived since he was born. At the age of five, he then entered kindergarten several weeks into the school year. Although compulsory education in Spain does not start until children are six years old, current educational thought considers preschool education most important. This is so to the point that children who do not participate fully in this stage are believed to be at a disadvantage with respect to children who enter the first grade having attended two years of preschool education. Following this line of reasoning, Quico would be a paradigmatic student at risk, representing the educational problems of many Gypsy students in Spain and in this case the south of Madrid.

The Gypsy community in Spain forms a heterogeneous but largely marginalized group of about one million citizens. In large cities such as Madrid, despite several ineffective political attempts to change the situation, many Gypsy communities settle in large shantytowns that lack the physical, hygienic, and economic resources that most Spaniards take for granted (San Román 1980, 1997). In relation to educational outcomes, although some progress has been made in the last decade, most indicators show that Gypsy students are significantly behind their *payo* peers (*payo* being the term used by Spanish Gypsies to refer to the Spanish non-Gypsy population and that will be used throughout the article) and maintain a relationship with educational institutions that is often considered conflictive and ambiguous.

At first glance Quico indeed seemed to reflect this history. He lagged behind in many of the knowledge areas of school that other students had mastered already, such as being able to count up to ten or name the days of the week. Also, he did not have several of the skills that other children displayed in class, such as being able to draw inside the lines or color figures neatly. However, Quico showed outstanding capacities in other classroom events. Chief among these were his oral presentations during '*la ronda*' 'the round', a daily speech event in which all children were given an opportunity to present to the class a narrative on a self-selected topic. Speech events such as *la ronda* (similar to 'sharing time' or 'news sessions' in English-speaking countries) are recurrent in kindergarten and early primary classrooms around the world and have captured researchers' interest because they provide a rare opportunity to study students engaging in extended discourse about personal experiences during official school time (Cazden 1988).

Performance in *la ronda*-type events by minority students in other countries has also been studied. In the United States, Sara Michaels (1981, 1991) has focused on the discontinuities between African-American

children and Anglo-American teachers. In her results, she stressed the interactional problems that emerged between these parties during 'sharing time' conversations. However, the classroom of our study seemed to follow another path. Although differences in communication styles existed between Quico, the teacher and the other children, the breakdowns did not occur. Such a pattern is less often discussed in the literature and is of special interest in relation to the education of Gypsy children in Spain. *La ronda* seems to offer great potential since, on one hand, it affords a number of connections between children and school life and, on the other hand, it builds on the elaborate oral skills many Gypsy children show. The latter is a trait that is often highlighted by teachers who have worked extensively with Gypsy students. Equally, although there is not any published research in Spain that examines the discourse patterns of Gypsy children in school (or sociolinguistic studies of Gypsy Spanish Vernacular in general), some action researchers working with Gypsy children consider that the speech style that will be presented in this article reflects common trends found in Gypsy children elsewhere (Ignasi Vila, personal communication, March 2001; Beatriz Martín, personal communication, June 2000).

Ethnopoetics (Hymes 1981; Woodbury 1985; Tedlock 1983) and stanza analysis (Gee 1986, 1989; Minami and McCabe 1991; Riessman 1993) provide a useful framework within which to understand these episodes. During the course of the year I was doing fieldwork in the classroom, it became apparent to me and the teacher that Quico was doing 'something different' from most of the children during his turns at talk in *la ronda*. Clearly, he spoke more than other children and he maintained, gained and regained the floor more efficiently than other students. Also, his presentations were received with laughter, comments, and attention from his peers to a larger degree than those from most children in the class. In the words of the teacher, 'he was able to become a leader through *la ronda*'. Most students tended to talk about their daily lives outside school but almost none would display the linguistic and gestural resources that Quico applied during his presentations, even when topics fell into the same categories across children. In short, it seemed that in *la ronda* Quico was concerned with the format as well as the content of his presentations.

Therefore, it may be argued that Quico's presentations shared many traits of *performances* in their 'second, more marked sense' (Bauman and Sherzer 1989: xix): he engaged in communicative exchanges in which aesthetic expectations were created around both the content of his stories and the way in which these were told (Bauman 1977). This hypothesis implies that the audience (the rest of the students and the teacher) is

incorporated at a twofold level. First, as we will see, with its responses the audience becomes part of the effectiveness of the storytelling itself. Second, the students and the teacher not only listen and attempt to understand Quico's stories but also publicly evaluate the quality of his presentations.

With these ideas in mind, this article analyzes one particular narrative and examines its interactional and rhetorical constitution. Focusing on a single episode within a particular speech event with the intention of drawing larger conclusions regarding the education of Gypsy children is justified on the basis of two strands of reasoning. Both these strands are tied to seeing *la ronda* as a *key situation* (Michaels 1981; Erickson 1975; Blommaert 1999) as elaborated in the next section.

***La Ronda* as a key situation**

Key situations, as discussed in interactional sociolinguistics, are specific social encounters that determine access to larger social (e.g., occupational, political, educational) opportunities. Further, although in Western democratic societies decision-making procedures during these key situations are officially regulated and based on public and universal principles to which all members of society supposedly have equal access, detailed analysis of their interactional management has shown that often the outcomes of these encounters are mediated by the local expectations and interpretations of the participants in the event (processes that are not universal or public and to which not all parties have equal access).

For example, Blommaert (1999) examined how, in asylum procedures in Belgium, asylum seekers contextualized stories of their own personal experience in their home countries (termed 'home-narratives' by the author) as crucial for authorities to understand their case and assess favorably their asylum applications. However, in the bureaucratic procedure, given the form and content of these narratives, they were either disregarded or scrutinized against conventions of order and consistency to which they did not stand up. Closer to the topic of this article, Michaels (1981) has argued that 'sharing time' can be seen as a key situation in the early school years. Publicly it was seen as an oral preparation for literacy, however initial differential narrative styles on the part of the children (which co-vary along ethnic lines) resulted in only some narratives and children taking advantage of the educational opportunities of the event while other stories, those often presented by African-American children, were seen as pointless and unstructured by teachers.

La ronda can also be viewed in these terms (although for different reasons than for 'sharing time'; Poveda 2001a) given the following chain

of constraints. In first place, as construed in Spain, it is designed, among other things, as an event to facilitate the transition between home and school (Méndez and Lacasa 1997). This is achieved by allowing the children to present, on a daily basis, a narrative of their quotidian experiences out of school. In this manner, students can progressively build a narrative portrait of their out-of-school lives and allow the teacher to incorporate this knowledge into classroom life. In other words, through repeated presentation children may build a fully formed 'personal story' (Hymes 1998). To achieve this, all narrative presentations need to be allowed to develop, and it is under this circumstance that discursive and linguistic differences may have the differential effects that other authors have pointed out (Michaels 1981; Collins 1996). However, in the case of minority children, since the narratives that are perceived by teachers as linguistically incoherent deal with the out-of-school circumstances of children, discursive performance is not always seen as the result of cognitive linguistic deficits or differences (pernicious as these interpretations may be) but as a 'reflection' of the unstructured environments these children actually live in. In the case of Catalan Gypsy children living in similar conditions as Quico, Virginia Unamuno's research (1997: 317–352) has shown how the argument that certain students 'live in unstructured environments' works as an ideological resource to explain and justify both Gypsy children's poor school performance and their unlikely future success.

With these considerations in mind, an examination of Quico's activity is especially relevant for at least two reasons. First, without denying larger societal inequalities faced by Gypsies in Spain and the general negative educational outcomes of Gypsy students, as a counter-example to these generalizations it invites us to consider much more seriously the heterogeneity that exists in the educational experiences of Gypsy children. Second, as will be argued in the conclusions, it locates the nature of these outcomes in resources available to participants themselves; a focus that should allow us to reconsider the paths to socioeducational transformations. Given these larger goals, the chosen episode is analytically relevant, again for two reasons. On the one hand, it is one of the longer and more complex texts produced by Quico throughout the school year, yet it is representative of a discourse pattern developed during this period of time (Poveda 2000). Also, the content of the story provides a very rich description of the social organization of Quico's family, information that is clearly relevant to discussions about the 'structure' of these children's families. In any case, the focus of this article will be on the rhetorical and interactional development of the story, while its content has been examined elsewhere (Poveda 2001b). On the other hand,

the text was produced at an earlier stage in Quico's school life (about two months after he entered school), therefore it can be argued that its production and reception builds on skills developed elsewhere: on Quico's part, it is based on discursive resources acquired before entering school, and on the teacher's part, it builds on previous professional experience more than on 'particularized' adaptations based on her shared history with this child (cf: Erickson 1996; Kantor et al. 1992).

Taking into account the foregoing, in the following two sections, a line-and-stanza analysis of the narrative is provided and later resituated within the interactional context from which it emerged. Finally, the outcomes and nature of these episodes are discussed in relation to minority and Gypsy education.

Poetic structure of a *ronda* presentation

The data in this article stem from a larger ethnographic study of literacy learning in a kindergarten classroom. For a full school year classroom interaction during *la ronda* and other speech events was studied. Field notes and information about the class and the school, a public primary school situated in a working-class district of Madrid, were gathered through participant observation several days a week. Also, video and audio recordings of the selected speech events were made at two-week intervals. Finally, all students and the teacher (the latter on several occasions) were interviewed to explore their perceptions of classroom activity.

La ronda is a daily activity in which all the students and the teacher sit in a circle on the classroom carpet and in a 'round-robin' fashion all the children may present a story of their choice to the rest of the class. The students do not have to participate if they do not want to and no topic restrictions are placed on the children. In any case, the most frequent subject of children's presentations is their daily life outside of school.

The episode analyzed in this article took place in mid-December 1997. Quico's complete turn is just over four minutes long; however, the full *ronda* that morning, in which all seventeen children were given an opportunity to speak, is about sixteen minutes long. The characters and topics introduced by Quico are already known to the class. The family members who appear in the story—sister, brother-in-law, nephew, brother, mother, and father—represent the full family unit in his home. The baby nephew was born earlier that month and Quico, in previous sessions, has already talked about other visits to the doctor to supervise the healing of the

infant's navel. In general, these are the recurrent protagonists of his stories. Throughout the school year his new role as uncle in the family was an intensely explored topic.

Taking as a working assumption that any narrative or piece of extended discourse is an organized purposeful human action, ethnopoetics and related forms of narrative analysis search for prosodic, grammatical, semantic, or metaphorical phenomena that work to organize and provide internal structure to spoken discourse. These ideas largely stem from Roman Jakobson's (1960) seminal discussion on the 'poetic function' of language. Authors in this tradition basically argue that, to a certain extent, almost all forms of discourse, including the most quotidian narratives such as those in *la ronda*, have poetic components. In everyday speech, rhyme, rhythm, metaphors, repetitions, and figurative associations appear repeatedly and serve similar purposes as those to which they are applied in formal elaborate poetry. Furthermore, often these stylistic resources help clarify, highlight, or background the ideas and events described in everyday narratives.

Therefore, this approach considers two basic units in narrative productions that stem from the vocabulary of classic poetry. In first place is the *line*, which roughly corresponds with a tone group and/or a predicative unit. These often coincide and can be considered the minimal unit in the production of discourse. In second place, lines are organized into *stanzas*, which represent closely tied sequences of actions around the same protagonists and setting. Also, frequently stanzas are verbally clustered together by larger pauses or interruptions at the beginning and end of the stanza in question.

Using these tools, a transcribed audio-video recording of Quico's turn was reorganized according to a series of analytical procedures with the goal of providing a final ideal version. (For reasons of space only the analyzed sections are provided in this article. For those interested in the full transcription it may be requested from the author directly.) In summary, the following steps guide the process:

- (a) The child's presentation is divided into tone groups ([Gumperz 1982](#); [Michaels 1981](#)). Other children's interventions, the teacher's comments and questions, and therefore the portion of Quico's presentation that corresponds with the direct answer to the question (the second part of the adjacency pair; Sacks et al. 1974), are eliminated. However, this information is taken into consideration when organizing and interpreting the text.
- (b) These tone units are defined as lines and the text is organized into stanzas eliminating false starts, repetitions and obvious

self-corrections (Gee 1986; Riessman 1993). Yet, these phenomena are considered indicative of larger mental processing on the part of the child. Thus, the information is used as a cue to identify important transitions and changes in plot development.

- (c) The text is refined based on recurrent patterning to reposition lines and stanzas: rhyme and rhythm, the use of repeated discourse markers at the beginning and end of tone units and structural parallels between parts or positioning of characters are used to reorganize specific lines and stanzas according to linguistic criteria (Hymes 1981; Woodbury 1985; Tedlock 1983). Specifically, *y* 'and', *y *aluego* 'and later', *y ahora* 'and now', and *porque* 'because' are often used as signals of a line beginning.

The result highlights an ideal version of the text. The text's presentation on paper is considered part of the analytical process and begins to underscore several of the organizational principles mentioned above. Within ethnopoetics there has been considerable controversy regarding what elements should be given primacy: oral features during performance (Tedlock 1983), grammatical elements (Hymes 1981), content (Gee 1996), or combinations of each (Woodbury 1985). Equally, there has been debate regarding what may be seen as universal features of discourse (Gee 1996; Hymes 1996, 1998). Finally, these debates are reflected in the proposal of transcription conventions which range from highly elaborate systems designed to capture details of oral performance (e.g., Tedlock 1983) to relatively simple lines arrangements (e.g., Bauman 1986).

My approach in examining Quico's narrative is eclectic in terms of what linguistic elements seem primary and results in a relatively accessible transcript. Stanzas seem to be internally consistent units that emerge from the convergence of multiple criteria: semantic content, linguistic marking, and interactional bounding. A possible version of the text, with added titles and parts for clarity, is as follows:

(1) a. PART I

Scene I: Visit to the Doctor

Stanza 1

- 1 que a mi sobrino le sale sangre por el ombligo
- 2 porque ya se le ha curado lo del obbligo
- 3 y no está bien hecho
- 4 y el otro día fue al medico

Stanza 2

- 5 y al abrirle
- 6 y se ha cagá'

- 7 y llevaba el dodoti' de aquí↑
8 too lleno de sangre

Stanza 3

- 9 y estaba llorando
10 {porque} se pensaba que se IBA A CAER
11 de cabeza

Scene II: 'Hanging like a Monkey'—Sister and Quico

Stanza 4

- 12 porque {a} mi hermana
13 EL SIEMPRE SE CREE QUE SE VA A CAER
14 Y LE AGARR(A) DE LA CADENA
15 DESDE AQUÍ

Stanza 5

- 16 Y A MI ME AGARRA
17 CUANDO ESTOY VIENDO ALGÚN DIBUJO
18 ME COGE EL DEDO Y ME LO AGARRA
19 Y PA QUE NO se caiga

b. PART II

Scene III: To la rebusca 'scavenging'

Stanza 6

- 20 y aluego se fue mi cuñao él solo
21 porque a mi pápa le chilló por de la ventana
22 y él no lo escuchó

Stanza 7

- 23 y quería (ir mi hermano) y tampoco
24 y le hizo '¡vamos todos!' y el Lisardo dició
25 pero no lo escuchó↑

c. PART III

Scene IV: Curing the Nephew

Stanza 8

- 26 y aluego de
27 yo agarro de un dedo
28 y le salió más sangre

Stanza 9

- 29 y aluego di{cí}
30 'Máma si quieres le doy un sobre

- 31 *porque sino*
 32 *el hombre se lo hace*
 33 *hecho un polvo'*

Stanza 10

- 34 y aluego mi hermana lleva aquí un bulto
 35 para que (se la regalaron) (el médico)
 36 y lleva una cosa aquí
 37 algodón ¡de eso que apeg!

Scene V: Keeping Warm

Stanza 11

- 38 y aluego/y ahora
 39 mi sobrino está caliente
 40 ¡ahí en el comedo'!
 41 y mi hermana en la otra habitación
 42 porque está fria y el niño se va a mori' de frio

Stanza 12

- 43 porque siempre le he dicho a mi mama
 44 *'Eeh máma que no se lo lleve*
 45 *que déjalo aquí*
 46 *y que se dispierte y que salga de ahí*
 47 *{de la cama}'*

Stanza 13

- 48 porque la gusta mucho dormir
 49 y entra mi madre en la habitación y ha dicho
 50 *'¡No hay nada de siesta en esta habitación*
 51 *que hace mucho frío*
 52 *y se va a mori' de frío el niño!'*

Scene VI: Breastfeeding

Stanza 14

- 53 y mi hermana
 54 pa' darl'e teta le agarra de la cabeza
 55 y yo le agarro del cuerpo
 56 para que no se caiga

Stanza 15

- 57 a veces se le cae la pierna
 58 y yo se la subo arriba
 59 a la pierna de mi hermana

a. PART I

Scene I: Visit to the Doctor

Stanza 1

- 1 that my nephew is bleeding from the belly button
- 2 because his belly button is already healed
- 3 and it's not well done
- 4 and the other day he went to the doctor

Stanza 2

- 5 and when we opened him
- 6 and he had 'done caca'
- 7 and his diaper here↑
- 8 was all full of blood

Stanza 3

- 9 and he was crying
- 10 {because} he thought THAT HE WAS GOING TO FALL
- 11 on his head

Scene II: 'Hanging like a Monkey'—Sister and Quico

Stanza 4

- 12 because {to} my sister
- 13 HE ALWAYS THINKS HE IS GOING TO FALL
- 14 AND HE GRABS HER FROM THE CHAIN
- 15 FROM HERE

Stanza 5

- 16 AND HE GRABS ME
- 17 WHEN I AM WATCHING A CARTOON
- 18 HE HOLDS MY FINGER AND HE GRABS IT
- 19 AND SO he doesn't fall

b. PART II

Scene III: To la rebusca 'scavenging'

Stanza 6

- 20 and later my brother-in-law went by himself
- 21 because to my dad he shouted from the window
- 22 and he didn't hear him

Stanza 7

- 23 and (my brother) wanted to go and neither
- 24 and he did 'let's all go!' and the Lisardo said
- 25 but he didn't hear him↑

c. PART III

Scene IV: Curing the Nephew

Stanza 8

26 and later of
27 I hold him from a finger
28 and he bled so much

Stanza 9

29 and later I sa{id}
30 'Mom if you want I'll give him a packet {of medicine}
31 because if not
32 the guy might get
33 all messed up'

Stanza 10

34 and later my sister has a thing here
35 that (they gave to her) (the doctor)
36 and she has something here
37 cotton that thing that sticks!

Scene V: Keeping Warm

Stanza 11

38 and later/and now
39 my nephew is warm
40 there in the dining room!
41 and my sister is in the other room
42 because it's cold and the boy is going to freeze to death

Stanza 12

43 because I've always told my mom
44 'Hey mommy that she not take him {away}
45 that leave him here
46 and that she wake up and (she) get out of there
47 {of the bed}'

Stanza 13

48 because she likes to sleep very much
49 and my mother comes in the room and said
50 'No nap in this room
51 that it's very cold
52 and the boy is going to freeze to death!'

Scene VI: Breastfeeding

Stanza 14

53 and my sister
54 to give him 'tit' holds his head
55 and I hold his body
56 so he doesn't fall

Stanza 15

57 sometimes his leg falls
58 and I put it up
59 on my sister's leg

The three parts, fifteen stanzas and fifty-nine lines of the text unfold in a patterning of both action and certain linguistic forms. The key elements in the following profile attempt to summarize these formal and semantic ties (each element is indicated with a consecutive letter that restarts in each scene, and the use of same lettering indicates continuation of the feature across scenes):

PART I:

Scene I: (Setting: Doctor's office. Protagonist: Nephew. Orientation with summary.)

Stanza 1

1 a c (*ombbligo, sangre*)
2 a (*ombbligo*)
3 b (y)
4 b (y)

Stanza 2

5 b (y)
6 b (y)
7 b (y)
8 c (*sangre*)

Stanza 3 (Introduction of new topic)

9 b (y)
10 d (*caer*)

Scene II: (Setting: General time frame. Protagonists: Nephew, sister and Quico. Elaboration of Stanza 3)

Stanza 4

13 (volume increase)
d (*caer*)
14 a b (y, *agarra*)

Stanza 5

- 16 a b (*y, agarra*)
 18 b (*agarra*)
 19 a d (*y, caiga*)
 (volume decrease)

PART II:

Scene III: (Setting: Morning. Protagonists: Brother-in-law, brother and father)

Stanza 6

- 20 a (*y aluego*)
 22 a b (*y, escuchó*)

Stanza 7

- 23 a (*y*)
 24 a b* (*y, dició**)
 25 b (*escuchó*)

PART III:

Scene IV: (Setting: Not specified/Home. Protagonists: Quico, nephew, mother. Return to Part I)

Stanza 8

- 26 a (*y aluego*)
 28 c (*sangre, Scene I*)

Stanza 9

- 29 a (*y aluego*)
 30–33 (direct speech)

Stanza 10

- 34 a (*y aluego*)
 36 a* (*y*)

Scene V: (Setting: Home, in the present. Protagonists: Quico, nephew, mother, sister)

Stanza 11 (Coda-Resolution Scene V)

- 38 a* (*y aluego/y ahora*)
 41 a (*y*)
 42 b c (*porque, mori' de frío*)

Stanza 12 (Complication Scene V)

- 43 b (*porque*)
 44–47 (direct speech)

Stanza 13 (Complication Scene V)

- 48 b (porque)
 50–52 (direct speech)
 52 c (mori' de frío)

Scene VI: (Setting: Home. Protagonists: Quico, sister, nephew)

Stanza 14

- 53 a d (y, hermana)
 54 b (pa')
 55 a (y)
 56 b (para)

Stanza 15

- 57 c (pierna)
 58 a (y)
 59 c d (pierna, hermana)

One of the most often cited structures of personal experience narratives is the so-called topic-centered or high-point structure originally proposed by William Labov (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972). These narratives are characterized by describing one main episode in a series of steps that usually appear in sequential order, clustered as abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. If one attempts to compare this style with Quico's text it soon becomes apparent that Labov's model hardly captures Quico's narrative structure. Quico presents several unrelated scenes and problems and certainly does not connect these in sequential chronological order. Yet, there is a clear pattern and organization in Quico's narrative that needs to be explained through other organizing principles.

Such a model of alternative narrative style has been discussed by Sarah Michaels (1981) and elaborated by James Gee (1989) who, to capture the discourse organization of African-American girls, proposed a topic-associative style. These presentations, in opposition to topic-centered narratives, are characterized by:

- (a) presenting a set of protagonists, scenes and problems that form part of a common theme;
- (b) marking changes in action or scene through intonational variations or routine formulas;
- (c) leaving to the listener the task of inferring the connections in the story rather than explicitly spelling them out;
- (d) using repetitions and reiterations as an organizational resource;
- (e) being, on the average, longer stories than high-point narratives.

A contrast of these latter traits and Quico's story presents a much better fit and helps highlight some of the points discussed below. Furthermore, although not much can be generalized from a single narrative of one child, it must be mentioned that research with Romany children in Hungary also described their narratives as topic-associative (Réger 1999).

In summary: Part I is composed of two scenes thematically related through Stanza 3 (and originally a question by the teacher). Scene II may be considered a non-narrative segment, since, on the one hand, it is not temporally bound or related to other parts (the time frame is marked by *siempre* 'always') and, on the other hand, it emerges as an explanation of the problem presented in Stanza 3—a rhetorical strategy described as 'extraposition' by Hymes (1998).

Part II/Scene III is set in the middle of the presentation and as an aside from the rest of the plot. Internally, it is highly structured and rhythmic. It is composed of two short stanzas, marked with the same ending (*no lo escuchó* 'did not hear him'). They may be seen as a pair triplets, with a //b //b rhyme (*escuchó* – *escuchó*), Stanza 7 being further marked as /bb (*dició* – *escuchó*). Although the plot of this part seems to be set apart from the rest of the story, within the interactional episode it is effectively placed in response to the audience. In a momentum of great laughter (further analyzed later), Quico introduces the topic of *la rebusca* 'scavenging'—what the adult males in the family do to earn some money, i.e., go out every night with their truck to gather papers, cardboard boxes, and metal that they later sell by weight. As discussed in the previous heading, throughout the school year children developed their own 'personal story', *la rebusca* being part of Quico's larger narrative. However, several features of this theme made it especially visible in contrast to the stories presented by other children and resulted in especially engaging episodes for the rest of the class. First, Quico's family was the only one in this class engaged in this form of economic activity and its elaboration was quite different from the descriptions other children provided of their parents' work. Second, a subset of *rebusca* stories had to do with different objects that the male adults found in the streets during their scavenging and brought back home. Both subject strands seemed to capture well the attention of the rest of the children.

Scene IV begins a new part and returns to the plot presented in Scene I. It somewhat elaborates a resolution of the initial problem, the healing of the navel, although the temporal connection between the two is not especially clear. Scene V presents a new setting in the story and continues with some of the previous protagonists. As seen in the foregoing summary, the narration has a sophisticated temporal and linguistic structure based on direct speech (further examined in the following) and a chronological

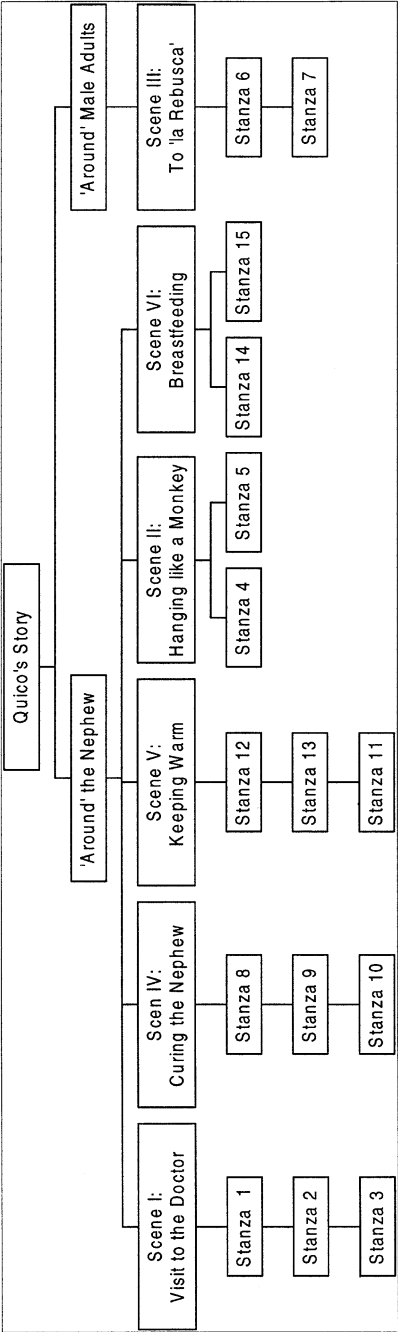
alteration (the resolution is presented first and later the preceding action sequence)—the latter another trait that breaks away from Labov's initial considerations of chronological iconicity (cf. Fleischman 1997). Scene VI presents a new setting—breastfeeding—with known protagonists. Both stanzas, as was the case in Scene II, may be considered explanatory more than narrative segments: nontemporal relation is marked by *a veces* 'sometimes' in line 57. In this case, Stanza 14 presents the problem and Stanza 15 reiterates the same situation without changing any of the protagonists.

In short, it is a presentation about Quico's family in which all members of the family unit appear. The principal protagonist and axis of most actions on the part of the rest of the characters is the infant nephew. A graphic representation of the story is reflected in the diagram of Figure 1.

The discussion so far has, at the very least, highlighted that Quico's narrative is an organized and structured piece of discourse. This assessment, although apparently reasonable, is less often granted to minority children's narratives and is often not attributed to Gypsy children in Spanish educational settings in particular. Teachers, focusing primarily on pronunciation and grammar, recurrently stress that Gypsy children speak poorly and make many mistakes that need to be corrected. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, there are not any sociolinguistic studies of Gypsy Spanish and therefore it is impossible to ascertain which of the linguistic forms used by Quico do co-vary along ethnic lines (cf. Labov 1972). Quico's speech presents many nonstandard lexical forms (such as *aluego*, the standard being *luego* 'later') and prosodic features (especially in reported speech, discussed later) commonly associated by this teacher (and many others) with Spanish Gypsies' forms of talk (e.g., Jiménez 1999; Abajo 1997).

These variations may be seen as *stereotyped features* of Gypsy children's speech (Collins 1996), that is, features identified as pervasive by participants (especially, in this case, the teacher) regardless of their empirical salience. The teacher increasingly corrected variations at the morphological and phonological level as the school year progressed. The correction strategies were similar to those used to modify the variations produced by other children (such as over-regularizations) and consisted of presenting the correct form immediately after the child produced a *vernacular* or *childlike* variation (Poveda 2000). This correction strategy has been examined by Collins (1987, 1996) during reading instruction. In his analysis, Collins concludes that a high frequency of these corrective interruptions deviates the task from reading and comprehension to decoding and pronunciation, a refocusing that is especially negative for

Figure 1. Hierarchical organization of *Quico's story*.^a



^a Narrative stanzas are organized in chronological (vertical) order; non-narrative stanzas are organized in logical (horizontal) order.

children with lower reading skills. In the case of *la ronda*, a parallel consequence would be an inhibition or early completion of children's narrative presentations. Examined longitudinally this does not seem to be the case for Quico since, despite of being often corrected, he continued to produce long and patterned narratives (Poveda 2000).

This discussion of variation and mistakes has centered on the phonological and morphological levels. However, the focus of this article and the work it relates to is on discourse structures and variations at this level. One of the better-known projects within this tradition is the already cited work of Sarah Michaels. As said, she documented a pattern of interactional breakdowns and frustrations between African-American children (especially girls) and Anglo-American teachers due to differences in the narrative styles of each participant. Furthermore, these problems and expectations seemed to extend to the rest of the Anglo-American students in the class who also learned to devalue African-American children's presentations (Michaels 1991). A rough look at Quico's presentation indicates that, although his narrative style corresponds closely to the topic-associative format of African-American children, the interactional consequences seem to be different. Yet it is a question that needs to be further explored. The following section delves into the nature of the interaction between speaker and audience.

Structuring of a *ronda* presentation

The analysis so far has provided indirect clues to the mutually constitutive role of speaker and listeners in the construction of the narrative. Thus, breakdowns do not seem to be prevalent. However, assessing an episode of interaction as 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' is a decision primarily made by its participants. To be sure, here is what Quico answered in an interview about *la ronda* late in the third trimester of the school year:

(2) Interview fragment (English translation)

I: (...) Do you like to talk in *la ronda*?

Q: ((nods))

I: Why? why do you like to talk?

Q: Because many times I talk

I: Sorry?

Q: That all the time- many times I talk there

I: All the time?

Q: I never stop talking!

I: You never stop talking ((laughter)), you like to talk?

Q: ((nods))

I: Why?

- Q: Because- because I was born talking
 I: You were born talking? ((laughter)) you're a 'talker' (*charlatán*)
 Q: A man from there says that I talked and when I was small I said *pa-pa* like my nephew now- I taught- I taught him and he says *pa-pa ma-ma*
 I: Your nephew?
 Q: ((nods))
 I: You taught him?
 Q: ((nods)) (...)

Here Quico clearly states how he feels about talking in *la ronda* and his competence as a speaker in general. A competence that, although somewhat cryptically, is also recognized by other members of his primary community (i.e., 'a man from there'). As stated earlier, the teacher already considered Quico an outstanding participant in *la ronda* and felt that this speech event was especially important in his transition into school life. Taking this as starting evidence, it is possible to go back to fragments of interaction and scrutinize key moments in which Quico and his audience engaged with each other. There are two issues of interest reflected in particular moments of the episode: other children's commentaries and the teacher's role. The first fragment deals with peer co-participation:

- (4) Fragment 1: Audience contributions to Quico's presentation
- 16 QUI: (...) Y A MÍ ME AGARRA DE LA CAD-CUANDO
 (.) CUANDO ESTOY VIENDO- CUANDO ESTOY
 VIENDO ALGÚN DIBUJO ME COGE- ME COGE
 EL DEDO ((pone un dedo 'señalando' de lado)) Y ME-
 Y ME LO AGARRA Y PA QUE NO ME CAI-PA
 QUE NO se caiga
- 17 PAZ: claro
- 18 ALU: ((muchos alumnos se ríen))
- 19 QUI: [XXX
- 20 FED: [¡cómo un mono! ¡cómo un mono! ((levantando las
 mano y los brazos))
- 21 PAZ: ((se gira y mira a FED y luego a CAR))
- 22 CAR: no cómo Batman que tiene una cuerda ¡fruii! ((mueve
 las manos y el cuerpo como si se lanzara una cuerda))
- 23 ALU: ((varios alumnos ríen))
 (...)
- 16 QUI: (...) AND HE GRABS ME FROM THE CH- WHEN
 (.) WHEN I AM WATCHING-WHEN I AM
 WATCHING SOME CARTOON HE HOLDS- HE
 HOLDS MY FINGER ((with a finger he 'points'

- towards the side)) AND HE- AND HE GRABS IT
AND SO I DON'T- SO HE doesn't fall
- 17 PAZ: of course
- 18 STU: ((many students laugh))
- 19 QUI: [XXX
- 20 FED: [like a monkey! like a monkey! ((rising his hands and arms))
- 21 PAZ: ((looks at FED then turns and looks at CAR))
- 22 CAR: no like Batman that he has a rope fruii! ((moving his arms and body as if he were swinging on a rope))
- 23 ALU: ((several students laugh))
(...)

In this sequence, several children engage with Quico's presentation. His turn (Stanza 5) is an excitedly told (loud volume with much body movement) explanation of how the baby nephew can grab Quico's finger. Several students laugh with this telling, which is not uncommon when someone is presenting an animated story. What is crucial is that two students (lines 20 and 22) expand and provide their own possible readings of the explanation.

If one asks the children how roles are distributed during *la ronda*, they tend to answer that when one student is speaking the rest of the children should be silent and if they speak they will be punished. The teacher highlights her role in assisting children's presentations, maintaining order in the group and elaborating on issues raised that she considers interesting. However, when one observes actual episodes there is much more interaction and 'talking out of turn' than what is initially recognized by its participants. Children, as in other research reports, compete for the floor and attempt to gain or regain the role of primary speaker (Erickson 1996). Also, some children might have been co-participants in the narrated events (Bauman 1986; Briggs 1996) presented (e.g., because they played together the previous evening, because they are talking about whole-class field trips). So in many ways they become co-narrators during the narrative event (Hemphill and Snow 1996). Finally, other presentations turn into episodes in which behavioral norms are discussed and children are invited to provide and argue their own moral interpretations of the story (Poveda 2001a).

However, Fragment 1 falls into another category. From Quico's explanation two children provide their own analogical metaphors of the scene. Yet, these children are not placed in any special position to contribute to the telling, by having been co-participants or by providing a behavioral maxim. My impression is that their actions reflect

engagement with the story in a sense that is similar to the instances found during storytime conversations (another daily speech event in the class). In these discussions, the teacher reads a fictional story and students are invited to provide their own interpretations and impressions of the narrative. However, in the case of Fragment 1 the interpretation takes place during a different speech event (*la ronda*) and in the context of a personal experience narrative. These parallels in *text centering* (Hanks 2000: 175), the way in which the social event is part of the interpretive context of the text itself, support the thesis that Quico's presentations can be considered performances. Storytelling time clearly fits a 'performance format' (Dickinson and Keebler 1989) in which the teacher uses prespecified and known texts, with several voices and the aid of pictures. During storytelling, engaging with the text is an official part of the activity. Several of these 'performance format' actions seem to be happening in this first fragment. In short, Quico and his classmates collaborate in adapting and using for their own purposes narrative resources available in the classroom.

The second set of questions to examine are the teacher's interventions in the context of Quico's presentation. One issue is to assess whether the teacher's contributions to the presentation fall *in—or out of—rhythmic-slots* (Erickson 1982). In other words, if the teacher's interventions are timely, they should contribute to build the story. However, if they seem to fall out of place, they should be perceived as interruptions and inhibit storytelling. Two phenomena shed light on this question:

(5) Fragment 2: Teacher–child rhythmic coordination in instances of intonationally marked lines of direct speech

65 QUI: (...) "Eeh máma que no se lo lleve % que déjalo aquí % y que-y que se despierte y que salga de-de ahí
(1)

66 PAZ: bueno

67 QUI: yy el-lo de la cama" (...)

67 QUI: (...) "¡no hay nada de siesta en esta habitación % que hace mucho frío %

68 PAZ: claro que sí

69 QUI: y se va a morí' de frío el niño!"

70 PAZ: bueno (.) (...)

65 QUI: (...) "Heey mommy that she not take him % leave it here % and that she wake up and get out of-of there
(1)

66 PAZ: okay

- 67 QUI: aand the-of the bed" (...)
- 67 QUI: (...) "no sleeping the nap in this room % it's very cold %
- 68 PAZ: sure is
- 69 QUI: and the boy is going to freeze to death!"
- 70 PAZ: okay (.) (...)

These two contiguous exchanges in the conversation represent instances of the same phenomena: Paz, the teacher, 'responds' right before the last line of what are sequences of clearly marked lines of enacted speech. These lines of direct speech are especially interesting because they follow a different prosodic pattern from the rest of the narrative and are often identified with a Gypsy 'speech tone' (*tonillo*; Jiménez 1999; Abajo 1997). As already noted, Quico's speech shows several features that are commonly associated with Gypsy uses of Spanish. However, the change in these lines of direct speech is a much more marked reframing that could even be considered an instance of code switching (Gumperz and Hernández-Chávez 1972). This is possible if we assume that Quico adapts his speech pattern according to context: certain forms are used in school and *payo* contexts and other forms are used with his family. If so, displaying the *tonillo* across Stanzas 12 and 13 is an especially elaborate rhetorical strategy since Scene V is a vivid illustration of the social organization of Quico's household. To grasp the form of the Gypsy *tonillo* the following schema might be illustrative:

- (6) Prosodic representation of Quico's 'spoken lines'
- a. $\uparrow E\textit{eh}\downarrow$ máma que no se lo $\uparrow l\textit{lee}\downarrow$ ve % que déjalo
 $\uparrow a\textit{quii}\downarrow$ % *
 *(T: bueno)
 y que-y que se dis $\uparrow P\textit{IE}\downarrow$ rte y que salga de-de
 a $\uparrow H\textit{Í}\downarrow$ (1) (...) de la $\uparrow c\textit{aa}\downarrow$ ma
- b. jno hay nada de $\uparrow S\textit{IE}\downarrow$ sta en esta habita $\uparrow C\textit{IÓN}\downarrow$ % que hace
 mucho $\uparrow F\textit{RÍ}\downarrow$ o % *
 *(T: claro que sí)
 (higher pitch)
 y se va a mori' de frío el $\uparrow N\textit{I}\downarrow$ ño!

Prosody seems to be characterized in these fragments by a pattern of clearly marked rise-falls at the final limit of each intonation group. This is accompanied, depending on the line, by another rise-fall point at the beginning or the middle of the tone unit. Extract (6a) corresponds to Quico enacting his own voice, and tone centers are cued with vowel lengthening (transcribed in *italics*). Extract (6b) corresponds to Quico enacting his mother's voice exclaiming. His pitch is higher throughout

Conclusion

In the 1970s, as a response to dominant views of minority children as educationally deprived, educational anthropologists in the United States began to formulate alternative explanations of school performance in terms of cognitive and linguistic differences. One of the most elaborate explanations was based on viewing teaching and learning exchanges as linguistic processes. From this perspective, communicative behavior and knowledge are the primary instruments by which schooling is achieved. The elaboration of this view has come to be known as the 'home-school continuity/discontinuity' or 'home-school mismatch' hypothesis, which has been scrutinized intensively for over two decades (e.g., Ogbu 1981; Mehan 1992).

In Spain, this explanation has not received any systematic consideration. Explanations of the outcomes of Gypsy children's schooling are based on other frameworks that include both psychological and sociological considerations. Well known explanations in the Spanish literature reproduce and apply directly to the education of Gypsy children the deficit models proposed in the 1960s in other parts of the world (Díaz-Aguado and Baraja 1993; Bueno 1993). Other explanations critique these views and apply structural and historical frameworks to understand the socioeducational experiences of Gypsy children (Abajo 1996). In any case, the intricacies of previous Spanish research do not need to be examined here. What is relevant for our purposes is to examine the possible applications of the 'home-school continuity/discontinuity' framework to our findings and how these findings might contribute to the framework itself.

The tenets described for the continuity/discontinuity hypothesis have led to an educational approach known as 'cultural congruence in instruction' (Au and Kawakami 1994). To support the empirical efficacy of this application, studies typically focus on two types of situations. A first alternative is to document instances in which the teacher belongs to the same ethnic minority group as the students (Cazden et al. 1980). Since under these circumstances teacher and children supposedly share similar socialization experiences or, at least, teachers are familiarized with students' patterns of behavior, classroom interaction can rest on principles and expectations shared by all participants. A second alternative is to examine sites in which some form of research project (consultation or collaboration) on linguistic socialization and educational outcomes is involved. In this case, community patterns are documented and later worked through with teachers to facilitate changes in classroom arrangements (Heath 1983; [Au 1980](#)).

What is less often described is what in fact is probably the most prevalent situation: Classrooms with minority-group students and majority-group teachers in which any approximation to children's experiences stems from the practical resources, effort and willingness of the participants. I would contend that the diversity of outcomes and situations one can encounter in schools is largely due to these personal variables. It seems that the exchanges reported in this article would fall into this last category. The capacity displayed by this teacher (Paz) to relate to and incorporate Gypsy children's experiences and forms of interaction is the result of prolonged and committed contact with students and community members from this part of the city, a lower working-class district situated in the south of Madrid, where sixty percent of the Gypsy population of the region live.

A construct that captures this process is *saberes* 'knowledges' proposed by Mexican educational anthropologist Ruth Mercado (1994: 61) and defined as the

heterogeneous appropriation of the social wisdom (*saberes*) contained within everyday life ..., in daily classroom work and in the reflective processes that this imposes.

Researchers using this concept normally focus on the way teachers adopt and judge teaching techniques in basic curriculum areas such as mathematics, science or reading. However, it can certainly be expanded to cover the learned expectations and tacit values that result from mutual socialization among diverse groups within a community (such as teachers, students and parents or *payos* and Gypsies).

Paz is a particularly good example of someone with experience in the community outside of the classroom. The daughter of immigrants from the south of Spain who came to Madrid in the 1950s, her family has evolved from living in self-built shantytown houses (*chabolas*) to middle-class standards. This transformation reflects many of the changes that a large group of *payo* immigrants who went to Madrid in the 1950s and 60s have experienced in the last four decades—here, it must be noted that this is an evolution that has not extended equally to the Gypsy community although they shared many of the initial material conditions. Growing up, (still) living in and later teaching in the district has allowed her to develop prolonged relationships with Gypsy children and families. As a consequence, she explicitly states that this has facilitated her understanding of how to work effectively with Gypsy students. Although there is no doubt that developing and displaying these *saberes* requires certain attitudinal dispositions, the latter are not the only component. For example, Paz acknowledges that these *saberes* are

not immediately transposable to the communicative characteristics and expectations of foreign immigrant students. This is a new type of student increasingly present in many Spanish classrooms, including Paz's, that alongside Gypsy students form the body of minority pupils. In Paz's case there is an equal commitment to advancing the educational results of *payo*, Gypsy, Moroccan, or Latin American students (the ethnic groups present in her class) but her differential experience with students from each group results in a differential facility to incorporate them into classroom activity (Poveda 2000). This contrast between Paz's experience with Gypsy and immigrant pupils provides support for the idea that efficient sociolinguistic *saberes* include more than just positive attitudes and incorporate social and cultural knowledge about the interlocutors' background.

In conclusion, this article is about the narratives of a Gypsy boy in school. School is a context that is often seen as set apart from the life circumstances of Gypsy children like Quico. Yet, it has been shown that in this case his experiences, values, and concerns were welcomed in the class. It is most significant that this occurred during the telling of narratives of personal experience because narrative is a crucial form of representing reality to others and oneself. Thus, engagement and disengagement with personal stories goes to the core of the construction and empowerment of the self (Hymes 1996).

Further, the episodes presented above attempt to uncover the variability that may be found in classroom life. The results of this study stand as a counterexample to broad generalizations about what 'schooling' is or what the unavoidable consequences of using stigmatized language varieties in classrooms are. Specifying the relationship between success during particular classroom events, broader educational trajectories, and later social outcomes is too complex an issue to be addressed in this article. Further, the empirical basis of this article and the project it stems from only address one component of this sequence. However, this study hopes to show the high degree of control that participants have over the development of certain key situations that play a role in this structuration process.

Notes

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1. The following transcription conventions are employed:

{ }	moved or added word;
()	possible transcription;
<u>und</u>	prosodic stress;
<u>CAP</u>	higher volume;
<i>curs</i>	direct speech;
↑	rising intonation;
↓	falling intonation;
[overlapping speech;
-	self/other interruption;
=	latching;
(())	commentary;
XX	incomprehensible fragment;
(.)	pause in seconds;
%	tone unit boundary;
*	contiguous action.

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